

EPIERUS COMPTUS (ERICHSON) (COL.: HISTERIDAE)
NEW TO BRITAIN

By DAVID R. NASH*

Whilst engaged in a long-term survey of the Coleoptera of Grovely Wood, an area of mature woodland near Salisbury, Wiltshire (SU 03) on August 1st, 1980, I took from under the bark of a fallen, mature beech, a single example of an Histerid beetle whose size and general facies I did not associate with any of our native, subcortical species. Having arranged to stay with my friend Mr. C. Johnson of Manchester Museum almost immediately upon my return from Wiltshire, I did not have time to study the beetle in detail, but took it with me for his comment. He suggested the beetle was *Epierus comptus* (Erichson), a determination with which I fully agreed after studying the specimen upon my return to Essex. As Manchester Museum had no comparative material, I sent the beetle to M. Jean Théron of Nîmes who kindly verified the determination. A search of the beech trunk in August, 1981, failed to reveal further specimens. There can be little doubt, however, that the species is truly indigenous since the locality is totally isolated from any possible source of importation. Although the beetle appears to be of rare occurrence throughout its range, it seems surprising that it has not been found in the New Forest which lies only some 20 km or so to the south-east of Grovely Wood.

In its typical microhabitat, *Epierus comptus* should not be confused with any of our other native subcortical Histeridae, its relatively large size (2-3mm), broad oval shape and multidenticulate front tibiae separating it easily from *Teretrius*, all *Abraeinae* and *Paromalus*. Apart from the structure of the tibiae, in colour, size and general form it bears quite a striking *superficial* resemblance to *Carcinops pumilio* (Erichson), a species which, although a member of the *Denrophilinae* and easily distinguished on the subfamilial characters given below, was described by Stephens in his 'Manual' (1839, p.152) as an *Epierus* before the creation of the genus *Carcinops* by Marseul in 1855. *Carcinops pumilio*, however, has seven striae on each elytron and the elytra are normally broadest at the humeral callosity and thence usually distinctly narrowed to the apex. The elytra and pronotum unite to form a slight, but evident, external angle, and the anterior tibiae are dilated with two distinct, widely-separated teeth on their outer margin, and a very large terminal hook on their inner margin. *Epierus comptus* has only six striae on each elytron and the insect is more-or-less evenly rounded from the anterior pronotal angles to the pygidium, the sides of the pronotum uniting with those of the elytra to form an almost uninterrupted curve. The anterior tibiae are gradually widened from base to apex and are armed with many small spines on their outer margin and have only a small terminal spine on their inner margin. The whole insect is also plainly somewhat broader.

*266 Colchester Road, Lawford, near Manningtree, Essex CO11 2BU.